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# SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 287.—Vol. X. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1894. [Price One Penny.



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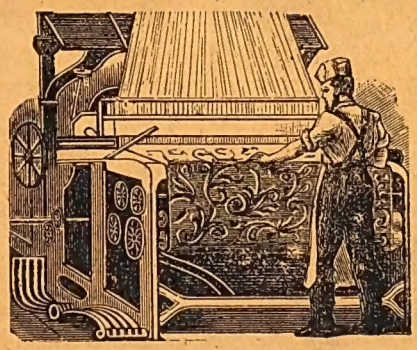

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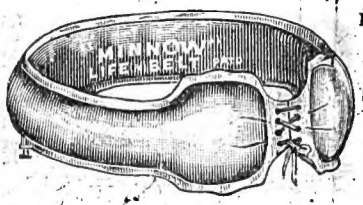


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# SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 287.—Vol. X. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

## A PORTRAIT.

IT is a theory of mine that one cannot paint a good portrait from mere sittings of the subject before one. The nature as well as the features of the model, must require study. One should know something of the soul as well as of the superficies. And so, as I was to paint the portrait of Mrs. Adriance, a woman of rare charm, I felt the necessity of some careful observation. Her guest for the purpose, I had, of course, the better opportunity of making it; and the hospitality, being a matter of business, hardly invested me with the sacred character of guest, or invested her with any of the shielding that should ordinarily surround one's hostess.

Mrs. Adriance was a woman of luxurious beauty, and of a toilet that was its fit setting. If I say that her husband was her slave, I have no word left to describe the condition of her servants; but in her house, which was superb, she reigned an unlimited despot, and her word, her wish, was law. She had many whims, each of which she followed till she worked it out and there was no shred of it left: now it was charity, now it was religion, now it was fashion, now it was literature, now it was art. Whatever whim she pursued borrowed for the time some of the beauty of the beautiful creature who pursued it, and seemed as admirable as she was—at least in the eyes of Mr. Adriance. In my own eyes—well, beginning as her abject servant, I had spent but a few days under her roof when I found myself thinking that, if I painted Mrs. Adriance as I saw her, the picture would be unpleasant enough to exceed the domain of art.

Nothing opens the eyes sometimes like a good prejudice. If I had not become aware of Mrs. Adriance's opposition to the marriage of her husband's niece for no other reason than that the girl was agreeable to herself, a pleasant piece of furniture in the house, and she did not choose to make a break in the way of life which she enjoyed, I might not have seen her so clearly myself. No one played Chopin as this sensitive Irene did; no one read verses with the same delicate inflections and musical voice; no one sympathised with her in all her freaks and caprices as this young girl did; no one had such taste to criticise and suggest concerning a ribbon or a ruffle, and let Irene's fingers twinkle for a moment in the lace or among the puffs and bows, and no French milliner could have done better.

It was plainly impossible for Mrs. Adriance to spare Irene. Who would see the point of the last social gossip with her? With whom should she exchange the swift glance? With whom should she talk over her friends and enemies? Life would be coming to an end soon enough, anyway; let things be as they were till sickness and age and death touch them with necessary transforming hand; why go out of the way and bring about unpleasant changes. No; let Irene stay where she was well off and made others so.

"And why did Irene wish to marry, anyway?" she would continue. "It would only be a temporary delight, and after that, weariness."

Doubtless very much in love now, in a year the enchantment would be gone and the bridal satin would be only sackcloth and ashes. No, it was as much for Irene's sake as for that of any one else that Mrs. Adriance opposed the whole affair.

And then the man was poor. It was true that was a trouble which Mrs. Adriance could remedy if she would, out of her abundant wealth; but if Irene chose to throw herself away, not a farthing would Mrs. Adriance contribute toward her doing so; she, at any rate, would not make herself responsible for helping on the sacrifice. Besides—see how selfish it was of Irene!

How singularly selfish to wish to leave this home where she was so acceptable, so agreeable, actually so necessary, where an aunt valued her as few women did their husband's relatives, where her uncle found her of such use, where she filled all the chinks and corners, where nothing could replace her or make up for her loss—how very selfish of her to wish to go off with a young man who must needs absorb her entirely to himself! She couldn't really believe such selfishness was possible to Irene, and therefore she couldn't really believe that Irene positively wished to marry the young man. And if she didn't wish it, what was the use of talking any more about it? It was not a matter of genuine love, but a mere phase of sentimentality. And as for the rest, how could Irene expect to be happy with a man of such a nature as Gervais's?

She had really put it to Irene. What manner of man was it who was willing to take her from her home of luxury, surrounded by the beauty of a palace, waited on by liveried servants, fed on all but nectar and ambrosia, to live in narrow lodgings, to wait on herself and him too, to dine on the joint warmed over—if there was even a joint at all! He must be a person both without calculation and without heart—without calculation certainly to foresee the want and work and worry to which he should bring her—without heart, to be willing to accept such sacrifice from her. What happiness could she expect in life in so selfish a creature as that? Or, on the other hand, if he had calculation—if he thought that, by securing Irene, he was also putting himself in the way of securing a portion of her uncle's money—well, then, he was warned in time. Nothing under such circumstances would be given to Irene; the whole fortune would be applied to Charities; and this was irrevocable, and he might as well understand it now as any time! He did understand it, perfectly.

"You can't think all that your aunt has said," he asked Irene eagerly one evening, "can make any difference?"

"Oh, no," she sighed, "oh, no, none—none in—our—love."

"In what then?" he demanded, his splendid grey eyes glittering like a young eagle's. "Does happiness depend on velvet carpets and gilt chairs and Dresden china figures? Upon a course of games or sweetmeats, or the right wines? Upon Paris hats and dresses?"

"Oh, no, no," sighed Irene again. "Why do you speak so?"

"I am sorry to speak so abruptly, my darling," he said, coming to her side. "But if your happiness lies in none of these things, then our life together can be blest enough. My salary will provide a home, and its simplicity——"

"Would be dear to me!" cried Irene. "Oh, it's not that. It's none

*No one played Chopin as this sensitive Irene did.*

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of these things! But she has been so good to me, always so sweet and kind and anxious for my happiness, as everyone sees, and she needs me so—and I cannot find it in my heart to pain her——"

"But you can pain me!" he cried, starting to his feet hurriedly. "It amounts to this then, that you love her more than me!"

"Oh, no, no," cried Irene again, breaking down in sobs. "That is impossible! And I can't see—I don't feel—I don't know what to do!"

She, too, it was plain, shared the general worship and absorption. "She has cast her eyes upon you!" exclaimed Gervais. "The basilisk!" And so things drifted on, apparently much as before. But there are always currents underneath the tide.

My eminence as a portrait painter—not to put too fine a point on it—allowed me to work unquestioned, and at my own time. And as Mrs. Adriance knew my ideas concerning the necessity of studying the character of my sitter, she revealed herself on one occasion after this semi-confidential fashion. Thus I did not feel called upon to show her my sketches for her picture, nor the outlines of Irene that I made furtively, finding it not easy to obtain the precise transparency of tint beside which the sea-shell's pink was opaque, my pencil fascinated, too, with the exquisite droop of eye and lip where all melancholy seemed to linger.

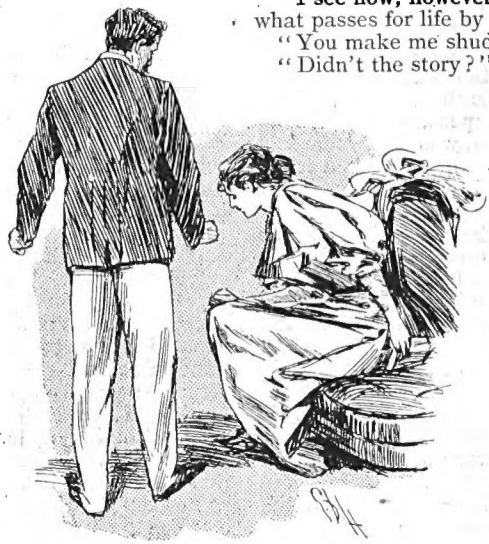
But while I was still pursuing my studies, Mrs. Adriance was evolving new opportunities for them.

"It is really out of the question," she said, "to allow things to go on in this way any longer, Irene. There is no state much worse than a prolonged engagement. One can attend to no duties properly, with all one's interest elsewhere. It keeps one in a condition of bristling electricity.

"You are absorbed and abstracted in Gervais now, and I feel it. We all feel it. One must bring the matter to an end, either by marriage or by dismissal. And in this case, Irene, I am sure your good sense will direct you as to the proper course."

"Oh!" cried Irene, all the pink flush mounting and deepening and then dying away in deadly pallor. "You can't mean——"

"Yes, assuredly," said Mrs. Adriance, calmly opening and shutting her great fan of crimson ostrich feathers. "I mean that your wisest way is to tell Gervais to cease to see you or care for you."



*"It amounts to this, then, that you love her more than me!"*

"As if—as if he could!" cried Irene, in a burst of passion, which was like a revelation.

"My dear! Such vehemence! I could not believe you capable of the shocking taste of it. Surely it is best that Gervais should make the effort. You, who are usually so self-forgetful—it surprises me that you should fail to see this injury you are doing Gervais by the continuance of the hopeless affair. He is simply wasting his youth and all his young manhood, and the happiness he might secure elsewhere by marrying a young woman in his own station of life."

"His own station?" cried Irene, trembling like an aspen leaf. "Is that not the same as ours?"

"Oblige me, Irene, by not repeating my words. It strikes me there is a difference between your uncle's position with his rank and influence and social weight—to say nothing of myself—and that of a penniless clerk on a salary! It might strike another so. There is a difference. If Gervais married a person accustomed to no more than he could give, he would have a chance for happiness, a reason for saving his salary, a home that would interest him and occupy him, and prevent his rushing to dissipation." One could see that every word went through Irene like a stab. "Don't make me any reply, my dear. But when you go to your room, think of it calmly, judiciously, with an eye to Gervais's best good, as I have, and I am sure you can come but to one decision. I would not see him again. I would return his letters, his trifling gifts, and put an end to the whole vexatious business at once."

As the king said, so was it done.

I was toying with my pencils a day or two afterward, when Mrs. Adriance came up, and rang presently for Irene, who brought her a book containing some fanciful arabesque designs which Mrs. Adriance wished me to see. The book was "The Thousand Nights and One Night."

Mrs. Adriance threw herself back in the depths of the wicker chair, unwinding the scarf and lace she had on her head. "Now I am your sitter, sir," she said. "And, Irene, read me something, anything, so that I shall not go to sleep. I want some vivacity in the picture!" And Irene, opening the book at random, and with a faltering voice, began reading the tale of the young prince whose beautiful wife leaves him at night, and whom he discovers to be a vampire at her horrid feast.

"What did you understand a vampire to be, before this reading?" I asked at its conclusion.

"A bat of some sort," said Mrs. Adriance hesitatingly.

"I never quite knew. I associate the idea with that of the ghoul who devours the dead."

"But it is revolting!"

"I see now, however, that it is one of the dead who obtains what passes for life by absorbing the life of the living."

"You make me shudder!" cried Mrs. Adriance.

"Didn't the story?" I replied.

"Too unreal, after all."

"It all resolves itself into the question of what it is to live and what it is to be dead. To live—is to be sentient of all other life, to feel the emotions and sensations of all other beings, to be aware through every pore and every pulse of the life of others——"

"How few live!" said Irene, looking up with her sad eyes.

"That is very pretty poetry," said Mrs. Adriance. "But poetry—and about the dead!"

"We will have no dealings with the dead," I said, "but the vampire—the ghoul—we meet her any day." And I went on with my painting.

That night, after Mrs. Adriance had gone out, radiant in her claret velvets and diamonds, Irene came softly down the stairs, her face white as the little ivory chest she carried, the shrine, no doubt, that held her love letters and her keepsakes. It was Gervais who waited for her in the alcove off the drawing-room where the lights were low. I went out for a stroll in the frosty air myself. Perhaps I did not stay long enough; for, letting myself in again in the course of the hour, I heard a broken cry, I saw a passionate embrace, and Gervais dashed headlong by me, and Irene fell fainting—to the floor if I had not caught her in season.

It was a tear-sodden face that Irene brought to the table next morning, and by her aunt she was pronounced to have a decided attack of influenza. But at dinner she could not be present at all, and for several days thereafter she failed to appear. "It is quite the best so," said Mrs. Adriance. "Once over an affair of this sort, the nerve is dead and done with. And then it is for the child's lasting good. Yet it is incomprehensible—and with such taste as hers in everything else—that yellow hair of his always looked so crude—for my own part I could never endure this Gervais very near me. And he was ineffably wearisome."

I suspended my work for some weeks at this time in order that Mrs. Adriance might accompany her husband on a journey, and I did not return to the house during that time—being occupied, I may as well say, with the care of Gervais, who was wild with grief and rage and longing and despair; his face ghastly, his health shattered, his reason unsettled, and his heart

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*Bowing myself out quickly.*

broken. "It is of no use," he cried. "There is nothing for me to do about it. She gave herself the *coup de grace*. She said it had been an idle fancy; she said she had never loved me; she said she wished for her freedom. She has cared nothing for me, she has trifled with me, she has played upon me, and she has driven me mad!"

I did the best I could in the way of comfort—it was nothing. If one had gone to the house and kidnapped Irene and brought her to him and laid her in his arms, it would have been nothing. She had herself put out the light. And otherwise Irene would not have come. She had understood that she was sacrificing herself, and she had sacrificed both herself and Gervais.

When I next went to the Adriances' mansion, Mrs. Adriance, lying back among the cushions of her purple velvet chair, superb in gold-coloured gauzes and great scarlet poppies, seemed to me the most magnificent thing in flesh and blood that I had ever seen. How rich was the carmine on the olive of her cheek, how sumptuous the crimson lips, how like fire in midnight, beams the lustre of those black-fringed eyes!

She laughed, a flashing laugh, of white teeth, and cried, "Now we are all right again! For you see we have Irene back!" How sweet in another's ears, how womanly, how lovingly self-forgetful might that have sounded! But in mine—I looked in a bewildered wonder at Irene on the lounge, in a clinging white gown, her hair fallen, the deathly pallor of her face enhanced by the wide violet circles about her eyes. She smiled faintly and sweetly, and murmured in a voice—not Irene's voice—but one like the sound of a leaf singing in the wind, "Yes, you see I am here—what is left of me."

"And are you still reading the story of the vampire and the maiden she devours?" I cried in my amazement.

I went, after a while, to my studio—the room which consisted of the upper floor of the house. I looked at my sketches and my canvases. I sketched a new one. I began to paint in earnest the next day, and I painted as if possessed with a sacred fury. I was up at daybreak, and I revised my work by candlelight. I ate almost nothing, saw nobody, hardly knew I lived or breathed. At the end of the week I went down to the room where Mr. and Mrs. Adriance chanced to be sitting—she with that tinge on her cheek like the scarlet on the side of a pear, and Irene, lying on the lounge, still and white as if in a trance—and I bade them to the view.

There on the canvas, with all the power of my pencil, the force of my will, the strength of my colour, had I pictured the radiant creature, supple, of abounding curve, of tints rich as the autumn leaf; but through the diaphane of her drapery those long and sinuous limbs were scarcely human, and that radiance—was it the phosphorescence of the dead or the life of the living? She hung as if suspended one moment of a swift flight, and beneath was a dream of dim moonlighted graves, and in her arms, as if snatched from one of them, or about to be cast into it—who could say?—was the lifeless form of a shrouded girl, blue-white and corpse-white, with the glazed gaze of the dead indeed. And her face was Irene's.

"It is the old story of the sacrifice of which we have read and spoken," I said, as they bent toward it in questioning wonder. "I never thought to see it made reality, as I have done in this house. You can hang it or not, as you please," I said, bowing myself out quickly, "but it is your portrait, Mrs. Adriance."

# THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to III.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather, Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve their mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN morning dawned, cold and grey, I came to myself, half-stupefied by fear and sleep that was not rest; I struggled to my feet. I went to the mirror in miserable dread. I looked to see if my hair had not grown white. I had not changed, thank heaven, but I was so ghastly, so hollow-eyed and wan.

I rubbed my face with a coarse towel, poured water on my head, and then arranged the room, carefully put my dress in order, and, last of all, I climbed on the table once more. I dared not go down that dark hall unless I knew that terrible thing had not moved.

The faint light stealing in the tattered curtain revealed the ghastly figure, the drooping head, on the lean, outstretched arms; the wine dried on the bare floor, looking like blood. The room was orderly, there was no trace of his executioners, and he was silent for all eternity. I pushed the table into its place and softly unlocked the door. The hall was dark and foul-smelling, and the doors all stood open; down the stairs with that awful feeling of a ghostly follower creeping after; another flight where I heard in the hall the breathing of sleepers, but no sound of wakefulness; then the spiral staircase, and, thank God! the free air, the blessed air, never so dear before.

I asked a civil-spoken man the direction to the St. C——, and he went a little bit with me to show the way. What a peaceful place that great grey building seemed to me as I passed the pillared portico. How different from that dreadful place where I had been.

"Oh," I cried, "how wretched to be poor, to be shut out from security and comfort!" And then, with a shudder of disgust, I remembered I owed all I had ever known of luxury and the joys of the rich to that man I knew to be a murderer. The very money in my purse was his. My pity was for the man entrapped. Had I not heard men say a Mexican's life was nothing, that they were not men nor equals? Could I ever touch that hand of John Scott's, the hand that could crush a bone like glass? And Aunt Marg; what was she with her saintly air, her lectures to me? An accomplice with villains. I was so sick of them, no convent could be so hard to me as to see any of them again.

At the ladies' entrance to the hotel a very old man was sweeping the steps. I told him I had come by an early train, and, without questions, he took my bag and led me to a great room furnished and carpeted with cherry red, where large, gilt-framed mirrors lined the wall, reflecting at every turn a white-faced, scared-looking girl. He went to see if Miss Collier was there, and then a boy came to show me to her room.

I knocked, and she opened the door. She had not been to bed at all, and looked terribly ill and worn.

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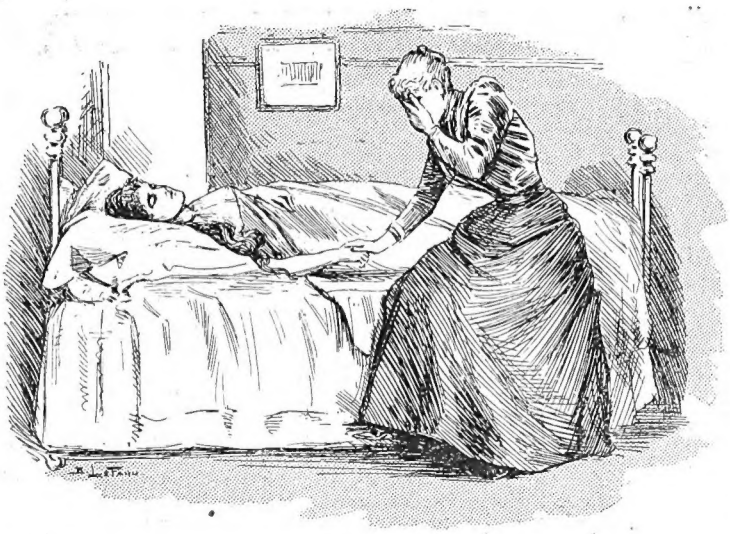

*Was I dreaming, or did she come to me and kiss my hand?*

"Letty!" she cried in horror.

"Yes," I said wearily. "I made a mistake in the telegram. I got here last night, and stopped near the depot, at a little place the conductor told me about. I got up early and came here. I thought you would be at the St. C——."

I lied, and I used to think after this that my whole life was a tissue of lies. It made me think of a sentence in my rhetoric, where one had to tell twenty additional lies to maintain one, but I could not tell the truth. Thank Heaven, she never questioned me.

"My dear child," she cried, and kissed my cheek, and I almost shuddered when she touched me.

"I am very tired," I sobbed. "I was so afraid last night, that I daresay I behave oddly."

"You never cared for my affection, dear, I think. But now take off your gown and lie on my bed; there, now you will rest. Shall I bathe your head with eau de cologne?"

"No, no," I almost shrieked. I would not have her touch me. She sat down by the window with a book, but I saw she was not reading. I half closed my eyes and saw her steal such wistful looks towards me, and, watching her thus, I finally fell asleep.

Was I dreaming, or did she come to me and kiss my hand, leaving it wet with her tears? Was that her crying? "Oh, my innocent girl, my dearest, that I dare not love! Would that my life had no sin; grant that yours may be without shadow. My Violet, and I was young and good like you, in my old home in San Antonio, and Mary was with me, and my father lived. Oh, the violets, the cool, green garden, the little purple cups, dew-filled and odorous, and I, like you, fair and innocent, gathered them in the early morning; and now I am so old, so wicked, so woefully weary of it all."

I listened indifferently; I thought her half mad. What did it all mean? I, a maid of the nineteenth century, had witnessed a scene of the Inquisition, and here was a woman I thought utterly frozen and clear-brained going on like a tragedy actress. I moved uneasily as though waking, and she quickly resumed her usual calm manner—the hypocrite.

"It is nine o'clock," she said, "and here is your breakfast; I have eaten mine."

Not a mouthful had she swallowed; but I ate heartily, for the past night seemed far off, now that I was safe, and I even found I had still some interest in adorning myself. I looked rather pale and hollow-eyed, though.

"You must look your prettiest," said Aunt Marg, arranging my draperies, "for Mr. Scott is waiting downstairs to meet you. He has never seen you, and I want you to make a good impression."

"I don't care what he thinks," I muttered; "I know the first word he will say is, that I am not like Katherine; his mother and his aunt sing that old tune always to me."

"He has been your best friend all your ungrateful life," said Aunt Marg coldly, her hateful self again; "and James Gregory, whom you copy in your conversation, to your great discredit, also owes the very bread he eats to Mr. Scott, the man he condemns."

"I never asked John Scott's charity," I muttered, and with the air of a martyr followed her to the parlour. Here a tall man was waiting for us, and, in the big room, he seemed to harmonise with the surroundings. I am five feet six inches tall myself, but he made me feel very small. At first I could not describe him, but it is easy now that I know him.

An olive skin, much bronzed, heavy black eyebrows and lashes, a thick moustache, and closely cropped black hair; a rather big nose and chin, and odd grey eyes that are brown sometimes or again all pupil, and have a sort of steely gleam to them. He is not handsome, but there is such power in his face that he attracts; and then, when he speaks or smiles, he seems to light up and to be so kind he makes one like him even after the Hotel Gilbert affair. But at that first meeting I thought of his cruel hands, and hated him.

"Here is Letty," said Aunt Marg, and he came to me and took my hand. I wondered if he would grip it out of shape; but he held it very gently, looking into my eyes. The moment he touched me I shuddered, and drew my hand away. It was a curious physical repulsion that I could not help. Oh, the steely look that he gave me under his thick lashes!

"So you do not like me, Letty Lombard?" he said in that pleasant voice, with a ring of laughter in it.

"I do not know you," I said haughtily.

"But Jim gave you some sort of an impression, I know, that I was a generally detestable creature of the slave-driver class?" He smiled, showing white teeth that had a cruel look to me.

"If he did, I would not tell you. I don't go back on my friends."

"You see," put in Aunt Marg, "she needs convent discipline. She has never been restricted in any way."

"I hope you will like the school," he said kindly.

"My likes are not consulted. I am sent for like a bale of cotton. I am provided for against my will; a genteel pauper," I went on hotly, all my hate surging up. "I never asked to be born, nor to have perfect relatives or angelic providers. I am ordinary, and liable to err, and I eat bread that chokes me. I go to school gladly, for I can by that earn the money to repay you, Mr John Scott, and then the everlasting nagging about my gratitude will have to be stopped."

Poor Aunt Marg coloured up, looking piteously at me, but he silenced her with that pleasant smile, and, looking vastly amused, listened to me.

"You think I cannot?" I cried. "Oh, I have been taught and dutified into a machine; but sometimes I break loose! I will show you." I ran to the big piano, and threw it open, and before Aunt Marg could prevent me, I broke into a merry little Spanish song my nurse Justina taught me. I can sing well, and I know it. "There!" I cried, as I crashed down the final chord on the keys, "I can pay you in golden notes from my throat some day, as you shall see."

He walked toward me, his eyes quite dark now and shining with tears. For a moment he could not speak.

"My wife used to sing that," he faltered, "your voice is so sweet, and it brought back the long, long years. I never could see you before; but I was foolish in that, you are not like her."

"Did I not tell you he would say that, Aunt Marg?" I cried; "everyone says that. I am sick of 'Katherine,' always 'Katherine!' I don't want to be like her. I would rather be as ugly as a tree stump, and I hate anyone who says her very name to me." Then I flung myself out of the room, and I imagined how those two would gloat over it and cackle, "Oh, she needs convent discipline!"

I expected a scolding, but never a word did Aunt Marg say

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during the two days she stayed with me. She helped me to get my clothes, and saw me safe to the school, but I do not think I even kissed her good-bye. Mr. John Scott I did not see again.

Oh, those happy convent days, when I could learn all I wanted to, where all was peace and poetry, and marvellous purity of words and deeds and thoughts! There was such music in the dim, dark church, where one could dream of coming years and all that golden future which a young girl pictures. Why is it, I wonder, that the smell of incense to-day brings it all back, and those serene, black-shrouded faces with expressions of holy calm as if they had found the quiet waters, and we only the brawling stream? Is it only a veneer, not a real look, I wonder?

The girls loved me there. They thought I was so clever and pretty, that I felt how cruelly unjust Aunt Marg and grandfather had been to me to let me grow up thinking I was really only ordinary, when I was quite out of the commonplace. I used to be very naughty, and broke every rule, but some mysterious power helped me, and I kept in the good graces of everyone. The girls said I made them love me by some magnetic power.

So a year passed, and I saw no one from home until in the summer holidays Sister Patricia came to me with an open letter in her hand and a look of perplexity on her innocent face.

"Your grandfather, Violet, has written a note introducing a young friend to us, James Gregory, the son of a neighbour. He says this young man will be in the city a few days, and as his mother is with him, he wishes us to allow you to go out with them. He seems such a well-behaved young man, too," beamed that gentle soul, "that I shall be very glad to trust you with him. You need a little change and pleasure. I infer from your grandpapa's letter that he regards the young man almost as a son."

I gasped, and then grew a guilty red. My grandfather regard Jim as a son, when he never allowed him at our house, spoke of him with rage and profanity, and once took a stick to him and drove him away! My Aunt Marg hates Jim too, and I used to fancy the feud began further back than our time.

"Y-e-s," I stammered.

"His mother is at the hotel, but he is in the parlour," she said. "Go in as you are. You always look neat." She patted my shoulder kindly, and I went into the room. A solemn visaged sister was talking to Jim, and had she not been there I should have burst into a yell of laughter.

*Sister Patricia came to me with an open letter.*

Jim is not handsome. He has red hair, bushy and wiry, light eyes, and is very tall and thin, and so freckled that he looks mildewed. He dresses in loud attire with horsy neckties, and if anyone took him for a jockey or a gambler he would be wonderfully pleased. But to-day he had on a black suit, a white tie, and a pair of large black cotton gloves. He had soaped his hair down, wore a seedy tall hat, and carried a cheap and bulging cotton umbrella. He had a crape band on his hat also, and talked with a snuffle.

"Yes, madam," he was saying to the sister; "you can't be too particular;" and to this day I know he cannot tell what he was wanting to be so particular about.

"Ah, Violet," he said in most solemn tones, and I dutifully shook that cotton glove.

*He had soaped his hair down.*

"Is anybody dead?" I asked timidly, and he gave me such an awful look I knew I had made a mistake. "You look so sad," I faltered.

"I have studied so hard," he sighed; "dear Uncle Scott sent me to New York to school, and mother and I came back this way to see you, and how"—and he threw an unctuous fervour into the words—"how you have improved. Grandpa is nicely. (Grandfather would have choked with rage at that.) He and Aunt Marg sent their love to you and such thanks to your teachers." And he went on in that strain for ten minutes. If I had not got away to put on other clothes I should have laughed right out and spoiled it all.

I donned my pretty cream-coloured silk and lace gown, with a hat and parasol to match, and various ornaments borrowed from admiring friends, and then I joined him in the hall; for he had got permission to have me spend the day with his mother. Outside the convent gates he took a good look all round, then solemnly danced a double shuffle.

"How did you like the make-up, eh?" he laughed, "and grandpa's letter I wrote. I mayn't be pretty, but I'm smart. You nearly spoiled it all by asking who's dead. Where's your sense?"

"You were awfully good thinking of me in gaol here," I said gratefully.

"Scott doesn't get ahead of me," Jim said coolly; "he's home all the time now; got a new carriage and horses; put me to school, too. He's a hateful brute, but he's got his match in J. G. My brother Dean is coming home from France. He'll show him what a gentleman is; Scott's been so long lording it over Mexicans, he doesn't know how to treat a white man."

"If they find out about the forged letter?" I suggested.

Jim turned and gripped my arm. "Have you got stuck up and goody? Tell me the worst. If you have, back you go to gaol."

"No, no," I cried in bitter earnest; "but I am cowed, that's all. I do want something good to eat, and a theatre, and slang, and fun like we used to."

"No saying, 'Oh, that isn't right'; or, 'I won't go there, it isn't nice, Jamsey'; or, 'Sister wouldn't like that.'"

"If you took me out to just quarrel, I'll go home," I said crossly.

He gave me a long look. "We'll have the fun. You are all right and jolly. What a stunner you've got to be. By Jove, Letty, you are pretty, honestly pretty!"

Somehow, that was the best compliment I ever had in my life.

"I am proud to be with you," he went on, "and mother isn't here. I'm travelling for pleasure. You walk up and down here, while I get out of this morgue outfit, and if I catch you flirting, back to the pen you go."

When he was gone, I turned quickly, and went to a newspaper office. I had not seen a newspaper for a year. They were not allowed in the convent. I got the file of back numbers from a polite young man, and turned to the past September.

. . . . . .

"Yesterday, an unknown man was found dead in a room at the Hotel Gilbert. He had evidently committed suicide by poison, for a glass lay beside him, part of the contents spilled on the floor. He had died alone, and without outcry, for there were men across the hall—a party of labouring men, drunk and noisy. There was no scrap of paper on the unfortunate man to identify him. Evidently he was a Mexican, a

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stranger in the city. The coroner deemed an inquest unnecessary, and the body will be buried to-day. A woman's fine handkerchief, scented with violet, and marked with 'S' or 'L,' perhaps a 'J,' was found near his door, but, as the adjoining room had not been tenanted, this will not serve as a clue, but only add to the mystery of the Mexican's death, and afford a theme for a romance."

. . . . . .

If these words were not all there was in the paper, they were enough for me. That was my handkerchief. I thought of it at the police-station, with revolvers, and blood-stained knives, and the trumpery left by murdered men, those pitiful relics of starved lives. Yet my heart leaped because the man was not known, and no mention was made of my going there. Evidently the landlord had forgotten me in the excitement of the tragedy. Someone touched me as I walked along the street, and I almost screamed.

"You are getting awfully haughty," laughed Jim. "You had better drop your airs with those that know you."

"It's the bad food at school," I giggled hysterically.

"We'll eat, then," said Jim, dragging me off to a restaurant.

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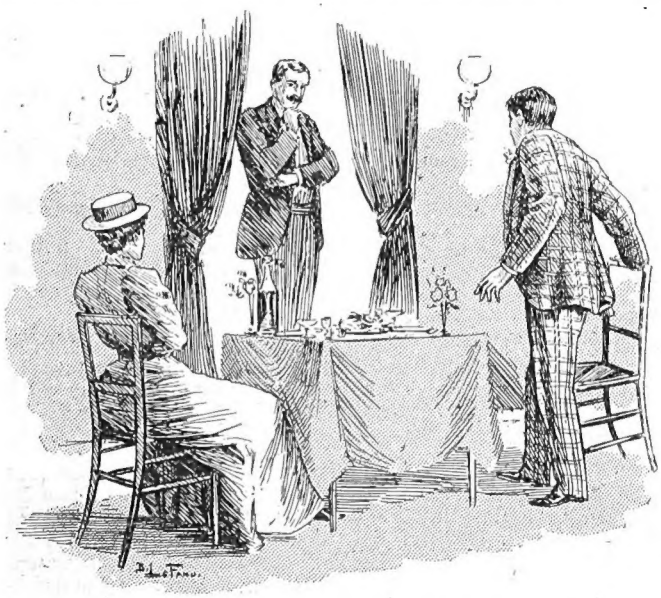
## CHAPTER V.

AFTER a meal, where we took almost everything on the bill of fare, Jim, with many airs, engaged a victoria—a dejected sorrel horse with a limp, and a red-faced and aged driver, who looked on us with much benevolence. We jolted over the rough cobble stone pavement until I was hoarse from trying to talk above the rumble, and every bone in my body ached.

Then, in a dark and guilty way, we went to a fair, where we saw nothing but a fat woman, a fuzzy-haired girl, and a melancholy happy family of monkey, cats, and dogs; but that made me feel very free and daring all the same. Then to a matinée at the theatre. What dreams of going on the stage I had afterwards, when I, Letty Lombard, would be a great actress and make people cry. I have performed so many strange parts in my girlish dreams, but no such sad drama as my life actually held.

What a golden day that was, for we were young and merry! I had lived for a year among such sombre folk, and even now, after all my history, I clutch all the joy I can, as I do when I may roam in the garden and pick flowers at will—I want my arms full. Jim was so good that day, too, and he did not murder a man nor live in a dark mystery. "What does it matter," I used to say, "if I take a sinful joy in vain pleasures to-day, by-and-bye I will be as old as Justina and as wrinkled,



*There, standing at the door, was John Scott.*

and then I can repent and stay there, for I shall not be tempted."

"How pretty you are," said Jim as we came out of the theatre; "your eyes are so dark and blue, and your cheeks are pink. By Jove, I wish some of the fellows could see you."

I squeezed his arm a little, with a happy giggle, for any girl knows, when a young man wishes the fellows could see her, she must be looking very well indeed. Even Jim at that moment did not seem so freckled, and I could have been bound his hair was a beautiful auburn.

"Let's eat again," he said, "before you go back to prison."

We went to a café where there was a pleasant little room off the big one, and here we ordered a delicious meal. Jim put on an air of surfeit, as if he were a finished gourmand with the expensive education of an epicure.

"Devilled crabs," he said. "H'm, they may be passable, but you get the best only in New York and at C——'s, in Washington." He patronised the waiter so severely that when the man went to the kitchen I had to say:

"You will let the poor man live, won't you, Jim?"

"Why is it," remarked Jim sadly, "that women get vinegary, get edgery. You need more of our society, miss, us men."

"We don't get it in convents," I laughed. "Oh, Jim, that won't do," I cried, as he ordered a wine card; "it looks so fast."

"One pint of champagne," he said indignantly, "the idea! Why, I know girls in New York that drink a pint at every meal."

Alas! how I envied those girls, and resolved to be as nearly like them as possible.

"To think," said Jim, leaning back in his chair, "that you and I hate John Scott, and yet here we are living well on his money, wearing good clothes, and otherwise enjoying ourselves at his expense."

"That isn't very good taste, that speech," I put in.

"You may as well admit it, Miss Vinegar."

"All right," I said, lifting my glass, "let's drink to him, to the health of Mr. John Scott."

We clicked our glasses. "To the health of——" repeated Jim; then he jumped to his feet, looking very red and confused. "Great Scott!" he ejaculated, and not till afterwards did I think how funny that was. There, standing at the door, looking at us with that hateful smile, was the man himself, John Scott. I did not rise, not I. I sat there cool and defiant. "Listeners seldom hear any good of themselves, Mr. Scott," I said icily.

"But I did," he said pleasantly; "were you not drinking my health?"

I saw him glance at the table where that guilty pint bottle, flanked by devilled crabs and charlotte russe, stood in shameless effrontery. "May I not join you?"

"Of course," I answered rudely; "your money pays for it." Jim only stood there, looking crushed.

"So I heard Jim say," continued Mr. Scott; "I came like Banquo's ghost, but don't let me spoil your banquet."

"We had done," I said, finishing my champagne. "I get so little palatable food at the convent, Mr. Gregory was kind enough to rescue me from absolute want by a meal I could eat."

"And yet you look," said Scott, with those hateful eyes, smiling, "actually and vulgarly fat."

I made no reply but a haughty stare; Jim gulped down a few mouthfuls. "Shall I order more wine?" asked Mr. Scott pleasantly.

We looked at each other in ghastly indecision. What was he going to do? "Let's make a night of it," he went on, in an airy way; "let me see—a drive about the city, the fair, the theatre—what is there for this evening?"

"I think you are a fiend, Mr. John Scott," I cried bitterly.

"And yet I am a mild and well-mannered person," he smiled, "quite acceptable at banquets in spite of my cloven foot. But joking aside, Jim, it was not right to take her to the fair, nor to this place. I don't mind the theatre, nor did I tell the nuns of the forged letter, but you must try no more artifices of the kind.

"Remember a girl's reputation is as delicate as a camelia, one touch and the fair white leaves are blackened for ever.

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This place and the wine were very wrong. I pardon you because you knew no better. I am sorry to spoil your fun; I don't like the character you force me to play; but I cannot help it. Say good-bye to Letty now. I shall see that you have no chance to meet her until she is out of school."

"I don't see why you should constitute yourself her guardian," Jim muttered.

"Well, I am, nevertheless; truly, you angry children, I am sorry for you—and mean you well, though you hate me so bitterly."

He might have looked to a stranger fairly handsome, might Mr. Scott then, with that pleading look in his eyes, the half-pathetic smile on his lips.

I went to Jim to say good-bye. "We had a happy day, that he can't take away," I whispered.

"We'll outwit him yet," said Jim, almost hopefully. "Look out for letters from Aunt Martha," and with those mysterious words he departed. I slowly put on my gloves, Mr. Scott watching me all the time.

We walked along in silence. It was a balmy starlit night, odorous with flowers, and soft and warm. How happy I should have been with Jim; and what an ending to our day!

A crowd of drunken men passing us pushed me rudely, and John Scott, with a little gesture of authority, took my arm.

"Oh," I cried in my fright and anger, "don't put your dreadful hand on me." He started as if he had been stung, let me go, and we walked in silence to the convent gates; there he stopped and looked me steadily into my face.

"You are an enigma. I cannot fathom you, Violet. I am sorry you hate me. I should have liked to be your friend. Good-bye." He left me then, and I did not see him nor anyone from home for another long year.

During this time I received curious and ill-spelt letters from my Aunt Martha, and these seemed to me so seriously dull they were given to me unread by the nuns. "Dearest Violet," one ran, just before I returned home, "James Gregory's brother Dean is home from Paris. He is a very fine man, and the house is quite gay. The funeral urn (his name for John Scott) is still there in its place, awakening sad memories of the past. I look forward to your coming home. I have arranged a series of intellectual, entertaining and moral festivities to amuse you," &c. I used to think those letters the very acme of wit and humour.

*"Promise me you will not see him again.'*

At last my schooldays were over, and on the very morning I was to go home a sour-faced and yellow-skinned woman came, introduced herself as Miss Wilson, of Galveston, and showed credentials to the effect that she was sent by Mr. Scott to escort me home, as my aunt, Miss Collier, was too ill to come. I hated Mr. Scott for a long, dreary year when I was carefully watched, and this elderly and uncomfortable person increased my dislike.

In the train I certainly looked very nice, in a new grey dress, with a bunch of red roses in my belt; and I saw a handsome and well-clothed gentleman looking at me. He finally stared so intently that I coloured and turned my face away. The dragon was reading a book of essays with one eye on me. "You had better sit here," she snapped.

"Why?" I asked innocently, opening my eyes wide. I knew she would not ride backward. Then that impudent stranger actually came to our place and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, addressing Miss Wilson, "but I know your face so well. Is that not Mrs. Scott's sister, Miss Violet?"

"Yes," said Miss Wilson, in refrigeratory tones, "and you, sir?"

"Dean Gregory, and I know you are the Miss Wilson my mother esteems so highly" (I saw him read her name on her book), "the teacher of philosophy at the Ladies' Home Culture Club."

How she bridled and perked up! She knew Mrs. Gregory; such culture, such a mind; and after a gush of information and polysyllables, she thought of and introduced me. I saw Colonel Gregory was of medium size, well-formed, with dark skin and black eyes. His hair and moustache were carefully trimmed, his clothing fashionable, but he wore more diamonds than a gentleman should, I thought. He had a handsomer face than his cousin, John Scott, but not such a thoroughbred air, and that remark savours of Jim; but I can only explain that John Scott was such a perfect gentleman you never noted anything about him.

But what a jolly companion Gregory was—so full of anecdote and so good humoured! He found better seats for us, and told us about the landscape; and when Miss Wilson had dropped into a doze, taught me a new game of cards that seemed simple enough until he explained that it was a wicked gambling game, called faro. Then I regret to say it had a deadly fascination for me.

"A good start for a little convent maid," he laughed.

I made some little joke about Pharaoh, and then hung my head.

"There is a strain of wildness in the Lombard blood," he said musingly; "not the old New England stock, but the new blood introduced when your grandfather married a Mexican woman. How those old Puritans must turn in their graves at Katherine, and now at you!"

Do you know, somehow, he had drawn out of me all my history save that night at the Hotel Gilbert.

"You see," he went on, "your grandfather must have been a bit livelier than the rest, to have run away. Then he married a Mexican woman who died early, otherwise he would have been killed off long ago. Your father was wild and unsettled, but in Katherine and you I see the old strain plainly."

"John Scott thinks her an angel," I said.

"You seem to care what John Scott thinks," he said lightly. "No woman is an angel; no, not one."

At Galveston, where the Scott carriage was sent for Miss Wilson and me, he squeezed my hand, and said he must see me again; that he could not forget me. My vanity was tickled, and I said some silly things, and then we were driven off.

After supper, when grandfather was busy with his roses, I sat in the porch with Aunt Marg, and somehow told her of my meeting with Dean Gregory. With a cry of horror, she turned to me and clutched my hand.

"Violet," she said, with a strange earnestness, "if you have any liking for me, any gratitude to your grandfather for your home, any goodness in you, you will avoid that man. Promise me on your honour you will not see him again, nor speak to him."

"Much as I hate mysteries, I will do as you say," I answered; "but he seemed very kind."

She looked at me pitifully. "I wish that you could give me your confidence, dear, now you are a woman. If we could only understand each other. Try to think of me as one who wishes your best interests. You have read many books, Violet, but in any book you may ever read, there is no pictured figure as black, as utterly without conscience or heart, as that man you met to-day, Colonel Dean Gregory."

*(To be continued next week.)*

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# THE POWDER MINE.

AT five o'clock in the evening of the 21st of March, 1814, the English camp before the walls of Rocq was in a state of high excitement.

The town, a stronghold of Napoleon, lay on the French coast, not far above the mouth of the Gironde. It was protected on two sides by the nature of the ground, and at the rear was open to the sea. In front stood a massive bastion, which for fourteen days had bade defiance to the artillery of the English; but the sappers had been working day and night, and at last the tunnel of their mine had reached the bastion, and had broken unexpectedly into a cellar underneath it.

This cellar, belonging to a house which stood against the wall inside the town, was entered from the house above by a flight of spiral steps; so that the miners found themselves, to their dismay, open to discovery at any moment by the inmates of the house. They were compelled to trust to speed and silence to accomplish their design without disturbance, and so far all was well.

A store of bags of powder had been conveyed into the cellar, and everything was now in readiness for the explosion, which was to blow the wall into the air and leave a breach for the storming party to rush into the town.

Inside the mine—that is, inside the cellar of which we have been speaking—half a dozen men had just put the final touches to the preparations. The feeble gleam of a dark lantern, which scarcely served to show their faces in the gloom, glimmered on a ring of bags which occupied the middle of the floor, on the black and shining grains of gunpowder which filled them to the brim, and on the snake-like loops of fuse which linked them to each other.

This fuse, at one point, ran along the floor and ended in a piece of slow-match, near the spot at which the opening of the tunnel gaped blackly in the wall, like a gigantic rat's hole.

This match, lighted by the man selected for the duty, and the last to leave the mine, would smoulder for about four minutes. Then the terrific firework would explode.

One by one, five of the sappers passed into the tunnel and disappeared. The sixth, keeping the dark lantern with him, was left to wait until the passage should be clear before he touched the match and hastened after his companions.

The soldier in question was a young officer of seven-and-twenty—Lieutenant Hilary Vane. He wore the uniform of his regiment—short scarlet coat, blue trousers, and peaked cap—and was armed with sword and pistols. Though not exceptionally tall or broad in figure, he was noted among his companions for his feats of strength, as well as for his coolness and resource in danger—traits of character apparent in his plain, strong features, and in his steel-blue, fiery eyes.

A physiognomist might, perhaps, have detected in his features a sign of his chief failing, which was too great a readiness to act on impulse, without giving his calmer judgment time to speak.

On being left alone he leaned his back against the wall and waited. A minute passed—two minutes. Then he stooped, his ear to the mouth of the tunnel and listened intently. Presently from the other end came the faint report of a pistol shot; it was the signal that the passage was clear.

He turned to the spot where the fuse rested, and with his finger on the fastening of the lantern, was on the point of drawing back the slide in order to ignite the match which he held ready in his hand, when another sound struck his ears—a sound which froze the current of his blood.

Some one was coming down the cellar stairs!

The stair, as already mentioned, formed a spiral, so that only five or six of the lowest steps were visible. The lieutenant, with his finger on the slide and his eyes fixed upon the steps, remained perfectly motionless, waiting for the intruder to appear in sight.

One thought only occupied his mind. If he were discovered he would do his duty; he would fling the lighted match into the nearest bag, and blow himself and the intruder into the air together.

Even as the thought passed through his mind, he saw the twinkle of a candle, as its bearer turned the corner of the steps and came suddenly to view. The lieutenant caught his breath, The new-comer was a girl.

She came slowly down the steps, holding the candle low to see where she was treading, her face ringed round with darkness, shining out in its full light. She was young—perhaps seventeen—and as lovely as a picture. Every detail of her figure the lieutenant saw, or rather felt, burnt in a single instant indelibly upon his brain, as he stood, like a man petrified, with his eyes upon her.

A terrible dilemma was before him. True, his duty was as plain as ever; but he could not—he could not—send this beautiful young creature to a sudden and a dreadful doom. There was only one alternative—she must escape with him. He held himself in readiness and waited, silent as a figure cut in stone.

From the ease of her demeanour as she came down the stair it was clear that she had no suspicion of what had happened in the vault. At the bottom of the steps she stopped, and, with the candle raised above her head, was about to cross the cellar to a bin which stood against the further wall, when her eyes alighted on the bags of powder in the middle of the floor.

For a moment she stood still, gazing at them. Then she raised her eyes, and they fell upon the form of Hilary Vane, standing motionless before her in the gloom.

With a stifled shriek she turned towards the steps, up which in another moment she would have vanished, when Hilary, darting past her, placed himself between her and the exit. She shrank back, staring at the sudden apparition with large eyes wide with terror. He laid his finger on his lip.

"Not a sound, or all is lost," he said rapidly and eagerly in French, "This cellar is a mine, and we are going to blow it up. But fear nothing; you are safe." He pointed with his finger to the tunnel. "Escape instantly; that way; quick, quick! your life depends upon it."

She cast a swift glance at the tunnel; but, to his surprise, she did not stir.

"Quick!" he repeated, quivering with impatience, "there is not a moment to be lost. Quick! Quick!"

So far from obeying him, however, the girl, with a sudden rush of a wild creature, endeavoured to dart past him up the steps. With a movement as rapid as her own he barred the passage.

"Listen!" he said, speaking with a sort of fierce impetuosity. "I wish to save you, but by giving an alarm you risk not only my life, but the lives of my companions, who will return to ascertain what has gone wrong, and will be taken prisoners. Before that happens, I shall throw this light into the powder there, and end us both together. Come, be reasonable. Will you go?"

"No," she said; "no, no."

"But why?" he asked, astonished.

The girl wrung her hands in agony. "I cannot," she cried wildly; "my lover is lying wounded in the house above us. If he dies, I will die with him. I have only left him for a moment—the doctor sent me down to fetch a flask of brandy. Oh, sir," she cried, flinging herself suddenly at Hilary's feet, "spare him, spare him, for the love of heaven!"

Hilary paused, in trouble and perplexity.

"It is impossible," he said; "I cannot save him if I would. I can save you only. If I do not fire the mine, my companions will return and fire it.

"But by that time the cellar will be guarded by our soldiers, and your comrades will be seized as they come in.

"Yes, as I said, they will be seized. No, I cannot—I will not—betray my own companions. I would rather, as I told you before, throw this match into the powder. And you—you must not, you shall not—sacrifice your life without avail. No; you must come with me."

He advanced a step towards her, resolved to bear her through the tunnel and to save her in his own despite, touching the fuse, as they departed. But as he moved the girl stepped back a pace and raised the candle in her hand above a bag of powder.

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"Stop!" she cried. "I refuse, I tell you, to be saved alone. You have taught me what to do. If you try to take me, I will drop the candle."

Hilary drew back, petrified. The refusal of the girl doomed them both to death; yet even at that moment he experienced a relief that the act which sent her to destruction, had been taken from his hands.

But there was no method of escape; to delay—to parley—would be to risk the lives of his companions, who might return at any instant to see what was the cause of the delay. Drawing himself erect, he crossed his arms upon his chest, and, with his eyes still fixed upon the girl, said quietly:

"So be it. Drop the candle."

The girl stood motionless a moment, with her hands outstretched. A tremor shook her frame from head to foot. Then she shut her eyes, unclasped her fingers, and let the candle fall.

Had she kept her eyes unclosed, the candle would have fallen, as she intended, on the powder. As it was, it struck the margin of the bag and thence rebounded to the floor, where it was instantly extinguished, leaving the cellar in pitchy darkness.

Hilary drew back the slide of his dark lantern. By its gleam the two looked at each other. Both their faces were as white as ashes.

"Fortune is against you," said Hilary, after a silence. "You are the bravest girl I ever heard of, but you are fated to be saved, do what you will."

"Then fate must save my lover also," she replied.

"Come with me," he repeated urgently. "To refuse is madness. Quick, or it will be too late; my comrades will be coming back to see what is the matter——" He stopped abruptly, struck by an idea.

"Unless," he continued, speaking rapidly, as if reflecting—"unless I stop them. Yes—yes; it might be done. And yet! Well, yes, it will be a breach of duty, and if I were caught I should be shot for it, and, what is more, I should deserve my fate. But I must do it." He turned quickly to the girl. "Will you obey me?" he said earnestly.

She looked at him intently.

"Do you mean to save me only?"

"No. I shall try to save you both."

"Yes," she said. "I will obey."

"Then stand here, without moving till I return to you."

Drawing a clasp knife from his pocket, he approached the nearest bag, and with two swift cuts, divided the fuse which linked it to the bags on either side. Then, cutting off a piece of the slow match, and sticking it erect into the powder, he lifted up the bag with his left hand, and with the lantern in his right, he disappeared into the entrance of the tunnel.

For some seconds the girl could hear his movements growing fainter as he receded, until he seemed to be about a hundred feet along the shaft, when all sound ceased entirely for perhaps ten seconds; then he was heard hastily returning. When he emerged into the cellar he still held the candle, but the bag was gone.

"It is alight," he gasped, seizing the girl's wrist and drawing her rapidly towards the cellar steps, up which he hastened until the winding of the spiral shut them from the vault below. Then he stopped and listened eagerly.

For some seconds—perhaps half a second—all was silent. Then all at once there came the sound of an explosion; a blast of air rushed fiercely up the cellar steps; a thick smoke filled the vault. Then all was still.

"Wait," he said; "I shall return directly," and he disappeared into the cellar. Almost instantly he was by her side again.

"All is well," he said; "the explosion, as I hoped, has caused the sandy soil which roofs the tunnel to fall in. The passage is blocked, and no one can now enter. Now," he continued, "how long will it take you to remove your lover from the house?"

The girl considered. "Five minutes," she said.

"I will give you six. The doctor you will, of course, take with you. Is there anyone else in the house?"

"No."

"Anyone in the street outside?"

"Yes. The street is crowded with soldiers."

"They must take their chance. Now go. But if you give an alarm, and if I hear a step approaching, I shall fire the powder. If you follow my directions you and your lover will be saved."

The girl caught his hand in hers and pressed it to her lips.

"Heaven will reward and bless you," she said fervently. "You will never repent what you have done to-night."

Hilary Vane looked after her as she turned away and darted up the steps, and he laughed a little bitterly. She took it for granted that he would save himself, and, at the worst, be taken prisoner. But he knew that nothing now remained for him but his duty—and to die in doing it. If, when he fired the fuse, he should dash up the cellar steps and escape into the street, the secret of the mine would be endangered. No; he had given the girl time to save her life and her lover's, but only at the sacrifice of his own.

He drew out his watch, placed it in the light, and stood motionless, with his eyes fastened on the dial, the match ready in his hand, and his ears stretched for any sound of steps upon the cellar stairs. But none came; and the girl had kept her part of the agreement. The hand crept forward on the dial. One minute passed—two—three—four—five.

A faint sound reached his ear from the tunnel of the mine; his comrades had returned as far as the spot of the explosion, and were striking at the *débris* with their picks. He almost smiled again as he thought of their bewilderment. Then he looked at the dial-plate; the hand touched the figure for which he had been waiting. He raised his hand which held the lighted match, and, setting his teeth hard, lowered the flame above the bag until it touched the powder.

The roar and crash of the explosion shook earth and sky for ten miles round, as the huge buildings leapt into the air in fragments, like a spadeful of gravel tossed up by a strong man. The English storming-party rushed in through the ruins, and five minutes afterwards their flag floated from the walls.

But why the explosion had been so long delayed, why the tunnel had collapsed so unaccountably, and why Lieutenant Vane had disappeared, were mysteries discussed that night round every soldier's fire. And it was not till some days later that a story told by a young girl, and passed with thrilling words from mouth to mouth, showed how one more English soldier had proved himself a hero.

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# SILVER JOHN.

WE were all in Painter's rooms in the Temple. It was a hot night, and the Major had been sitting by the window, and had not opened his mouth once except for a drink. Then we pulled a chair into the middle of the room and dragged him into it. "Tell us how it was you left America, sir," said Painter, holding out a cigar box. The Major chose a weed deliberately, and this is the story he told:

"The town of Starbuck had sprung up immediately after the construction of the Mockton and Ashville Railway. It had become a country seat even before a plough, drawn by a yoke of steers, had done marking out the principal streets, and the first office building, made of unplaned pine woods, bore over the narrow entrance the following information: 'Geo. W. Babroid, Attorney-at-Law.'

"The blacksmith's shop, the nucleus round which the country town usually springs, had not been built when I wrote that sign with blacking and a paint brush.

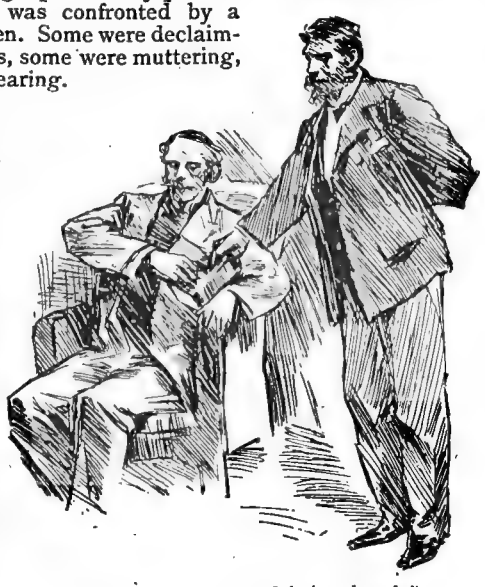
"A stranger, in commenting, in a good-natured way, upon the seeming haste in setting up a lawyer's office, said: 'I always thought that the lawyer was a sort of unavoidable evil of the old settlements; and never before had cause to suppose that he was a necessity to an embryo community.'

"'That's all well enough,' a lank fellow, leaning against a tree, answered, 'but mebby you don't know these here fellows like we do. We know mighty well that there's goin' to be a good deal of cuttin' an' shootin' here before many houses are put up, and as we air a law-abidin' set of folk, we'll want the lawyer to git us out of scrapes.'

"Well, one house went up after another, or, if you will, one house went up before another, until Starbuck had the appearance of quite a village. The blacksmith got down to his work, the justice of the peace stacked up his worthless books, and I pleaded the cause of the miscreant. I grew with my surroundings, and soon held a mortgage on a pretty fair crop of potatoes, grown by the man that had dug the town well, and who had, at an idle and dull time, stabbed the fellow that had stood on the top and received the buckets of clay.

"A courthouse was built, and other lawyers came and reared their edifices, and the scent of much necessary litigation was sniffed in the air, but no attorney, however aspiring he might be, tried to place himself upon a litigious par with your humble servant.

"One day, while the town was fitfully dozing under the glare of a mercilessly hot sun, a great commotion arose in the street. I sprang up from my pine table and hastened to the door. Here I was confronted by a party of noisy men. Some were declaiming in loud tones, some were muttering, and all were swearing.



*"Tell us how it was you left America, sir."*

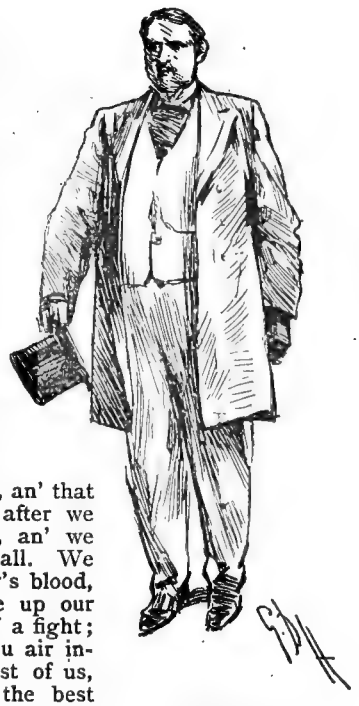
"'We want to come in,' said the leader of the gang, addressing himself to me.

"'All right, gentlemen,' I replied, stepping back and bowing; 'you are all welcome—that is, as many as can get in.'

"The men eagerly pushed their way through the door, and the room was soon filled.

"'Now, what can I do for you?' I asked, when with difficulty I had found room enough in which to turn about and address the crowd. 'But before you proceed to explain, let me tell you most emphatically that I cannot consent to become a candidate for office.'

"Here I stopped and anxiously scanned the faces about me, and Dick Munday hastily declared that no one was thinking about asking me to run for office.



*"John Converton."*

"'We have come on a more serious business,' Munday continued. 'A feller comes to town this mornin' an' claims that he has a deed to this here lan', an' that we'll have to be driv off after we have built up our homes, an' we don't intend to do it, that's all. We don't intend to shed nobody's blood, but we don't want to give up our rights without some sort of a fight; so we thought that as you air interested along with the rest of us, an' knowin' that you air the best lawyer anywhar about, we would come to you an' ask you to put the thing in the court for us, an' see that it goes through all right.'

"'Gentlemen,' I responded, making as much of a bow as the limited space about me would admit, 'I thank you for the confidence you repose in me, and I assure you that it shall not be misplaced.

"'I thought that our titles to this land were perfect, and I believe now that they are. At least we shall see. Rest assured that I will do everything in my power to protect your homes. By the way, who is the party that sets up the claim?'

"'He is a swelled and fancy-lookin' feller from some city,' Munday answered.

"'All right; let him or his attorney confer with me. I will show him what it is to attempt such wholesale robbery.'

"That night a great indignation meeting was held. It was known that I had undertaken the fight of protecting the rights of the people, and a sort of song, not unlike a campaign hymn, was sung in praise of the champion.

"The next day, while I was sitting in my office, feeling thankful that I was soon to become the leading man of that part of the country, a portly, well-dressed individual entered the apartment.

"'Is this Major Babroid?' the visitor asked.

"'You have hit it the very first shot,' I answered. 'Sit down.'

"The visitor sat down, and taking out a bunch of papers, looked over the documents for a few moments, and then said:

"'I was not in this part of the country when your town was laid out, or I should have given warning that this land was not in the market. I have a deed here which I don't imagine can be disputed.'

"'Oh!' I exclaimed. 'You are the man that has brought about all this trouble—eh?'

"'I hope that I have not brought about any trouble, but I am assuredly the man that will bring about a decision of justice. I have often heard of you. You came here from Dabbs country, I believe?'

"'Yes, sir,' I assented.

"'I thought so,' my visitor continued. 'I say that I have often heard of you, and I must confess that from what I heard I was hardly prepared to find you so reckless with regard to the rights of others. I was told that you were a man of fine judgment, and that you stood a chance of one day occupying a place on the supreme bench of the State

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"'But I see that I have been wrongly informed, for, instead of finding you a man of judgment, I discover that you have taken a case that you cannot hope to win—a case in which justice will oppose you. What is your house and lot worth?'

"'Oh,' I began, slowly scratching my head, 'I should think that if we get another railway—and another one is talked of—my property here ought to be worth £300.'

"'Cost you £50, I suppose.'

"'Well, y—yes.'

"'Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I could get any lawyer in the States; but the fact is, I want you—want a man who is identified with the place, so, if you will take up my case, I will agree to give you £300 for your property, and in addition a handsome sum when the case is won. What do you say?'

"'What is your name?' I managed to ask.

"'John Cowerton,' my visitor answered. 'Some people call me Silver John, but that's no matter. What do you say to my offer?'

"'Come back to-night.'

"'Very well,' said Silver John, 'but in the meantime please do not mention the fact that I have called on you.'

"There was no danger of my mentioning it. I went out, after the wealthy man was gone, and strode along the street. After all, why should I stand by the people of the town? What had they done for me? Did not I have to buy land, the same as the rest of them? By defending the town's people, I could at best save only my home; but by gaining the case for Silver John, I could sell my home for a good figure, or retain it, just as I liked, and, besides, secure a large sum in cash. I was a lawyer, and was looking for clients. And I had found one.

"Silver John was in time that night, and all the arrangements for the suit were made.

"'Now,' said the client, rising, 'I shall have to go, but I will see you again soon. Good-night.'

"You can imagine I did not sleep that night for dreaming of money and high places. I could tell the people that my regard for justice had driven me to the extremity of opposing them, and I felt that when they had thought over the situation they might not hold me in a loving grasp, but that they would not choke me in revenge. I had gone to bed, but was still musing, when I heard a great tumult in the street.

"'I wonder what that means?' I said, getting up, hastily putting on my clothes, and going to the door. Looking out I saw a dark, moving mass.

"'Come out of thar,' a voice shouted

"'That you, boys?'

"'Yes. Come out here.'

"'What do you want?' I asked in tones that trembled, for a half-suspected fear had seized me.

"'Want you.'

"The mass came nearer, and by the light shining through the doorway I recognised some of my neighbours.

"'Hello, boys, what can I do for you?'

"'We don't want you to do nothin' fur us. We want to do somethin' fur you. We ain't got time to explain much. You have sold yourself to th' inimy, and we air going to hang you.'

"'Great heavens, boys——'

"'Grab him. Hush yo' yollerin', ur we'll gag you.'

"They took me down by the spring branch where an oak leaned over the stream.

"'String him up here!'

"'Hold on!' demanded a big man, with a slouch hat drawn over his face. 'I am an officer of the law and want this feller—want to take him back to Tennessee. Let me have him, I say.'

"The men fell back, and the big man, taking hold of the rope that had been tied about my neck, led me away. We crossed the clearing, passed through a skirt of woods, and then walked on, neither of us speaking.

"'What are you going to take me to Tennessee for?' I asked, breaking the long silence.

"'Hush!'

"On we went, and the darkness deepened, more and more, as if black curtains had been drawn to shield from sight the birth of a new day.

"'Sit down here,' said the big man, pushing me towards a log. Then I sat down, and the big man stood with his back to me. An owl scrambled into his hole, a dawn-bird twittered; it was daylight.

"The big man turned toward me as he said:

"'You don't know me?'

"'No, I don't believe I do.'

"'Dan Moore!'

"That made me start.

"'If you are Dan Moore, why did you wish to save my life? I drove you out of a Colorado town.'

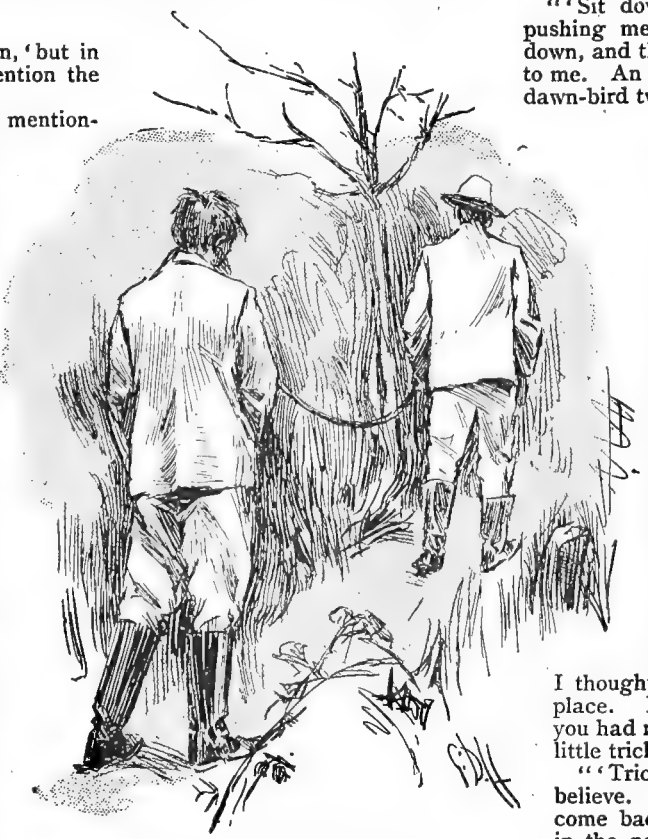
"'Yes, and I have driven you out of Starbuck. I am also Silver John, unwhiskered. I have never had any title to that land, and I merely started the report to stir up public feeling. I knew that I could get you to take up the case, and I also knew that those fellows would hang you, but I felt sorry for you at the last moment.

"'I saw that you would become the leading lawyer of the community, and as I am somewhat of a lawyer myself, I thought that I would like to take your place. But I couldn't run you out as you had run me, so I had to resort to a little trickery.

"'Trickery is permissible in law, I believe. Now, you may go; but if you come back to Starbuck, or even settle in the neighbourhood, I will make those fellows hang you. I have already made a settlement with the man who claimed their land,' he added, with a chuckle.

"'I hope you will have a pleasant journey. The weather is pleasanter than it was when I left a town at the muzzle of your pistol, listening to the howling of a hundred ruffians. You quite understand, I hope, that it will be safer for you to give this place a wide berth in the future. Don't let me detain you. Good-bye.'"

The major had finished. Painter thanked him solemnly and refilled his glass. But we never believed a word he said after that.



*We passed through a skirt of the woods.*

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*To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.*

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# A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

DID I know Mrs. Westcott of the Manor? I should think I did. I was there from the time she was married until the establishment was broken up. And before that we had known each other as girls, though our positions, of course, were very different.

She was just twenty-one when she was married, and I was about a year older, and as I happened just then to be at home she was as pleased as possible to have me. It was reckoned that she had made a good match, as Mr. Richard Westcott was supposed to be very well-to-do. At any rate, he always rode fine horses, spent his money freely, and after the marriage would have the housekeeping go on in the most expensive style.

For the first two years I acted as Mrs. Westcott's maid, and then, when the first child, a boy, was born, I was made nurse.

Well, for the first three years they were married things went on all right, with plenty of fine parties and an open house to all comers, when suddenly a crash came, and it was found that Mr. Richard Westcott was by no means so rich as he had made people believe.

He had deceived his own wife as much as anybody, and it was a terrible blow to her to find that they were in debt right and left. As soon as she discovered how matters stood she set to work to straighten things as much as she was able. She was a little woman, and quiet too in her way, but she had the spirit and fire of fifty men, gentle as she seemed. She hated a debt worse than poison. She could wear a cotton frock and look a lady in it—aye, and was willing too, so that they could pay for it honestly—but to be dressed in fine clothes, and owe people money, was gall and wormwood to her.

Her first stroke was in housekeeping. Three servants out of the five received warning at once. She kept me and cook; and as all the company they used to see kept far enough away now that the junketing was over, we could manage the work easily enough.

Week in, week out, no one came to the house except Mr. George Westcott, Mr. Richard's uncle. He was an old bachelor, very rich, and very queer in his ways. He was a wonderfully outspoken old man too.

One day the master must have been asking him to help him, for he broke out right before me: "Look here, Dick," says he, "I won't either give you a penny or lend you a penny. When I'm dead your boy will get every farthing I own, but till then I won't part with a farthing, so don't bother me."

The master turned as red as fire and went straight out of the room. Old Mr. Westcott's fancy was to collect diamonds, and in that he was as odd as in everything else. Instead of having them bright and shining, he used to buy them when they looked like rough pieces of stone. I've seen him showing them to Mrs. Westcott, and saying they were worth hundreds of pounds, when all the while they didn't look worth a shilling.

He lived about five miles off, and when he intended to be away from home he would bring over a big leather case in which he kept these diamonds, and leave them in his nephew's care. This made Mrs. Westcott very uneasy, and two or three times she urged him to put them in the bank at Oakford, where they would be safer. However, he wouldn't hear of such a thing, and as they didn't wish to offend him they let him have his own way.

I remember well it was about a week before one Christmas when he drove over and left this case with them as usual, as he was off to France.

"I do wish he wouldn't do so," said my mistress. "It makes me very uncomfortable to have such valuable things in the house which are not our own."

Early the next morning I was cleaning the step when two rough-looking men came up and asked where the master was. As it happened, he crossed the hall as they were speaking, and came out at once. One gave him a paper to read, and no sooner had he looked at it than he turned as white as a sheet.

He drew the men aside and spoke to them for a few moments, and then they went away. "No longer than three days, sir, at the outside," said one of them, as he turned to go. It was evidently some other extravagance of his turning up and no money to meet the bill.

An hour afterwards I was passing the stables when I saw the master leading his horse, ready saddled, out into the yard.

"Jane," said he, "tell your mistress I'm going out on business, and may not get back before to-morrow."

To anyone but myself this would have seemed a most curious message, considering that the mistress was only just indoors, and he might have told her himself. But I saw where the land lay at once. He was going to beg some of his acquaintances to help him, and she would have died sooner than beg of any one.

He knew that well enough, and so he was slipping off without her knowledge.

That day the cook had obtained permission to go to Oakford to see her friends, returning, as it was some distance, the next morning, so that, unless Mr. Westcott returned, we should be quite alone for the night.

The short winter day went by, the evening began to close in, and he had not returned. In the afternoon the little boy had been rather feverish, and, as the evening wore on, he was worse, and both of us sat by him all the time. It grew later, and still Mr. Westcott had not come home. We were sitting in the night nursery when the clock struck eleven.

"Evidently Mr. Westcott is not coming back to-night, Jane," said my mistress, "so you may make the house secure."

She went round with me, and we saw every bolt and lock fastened, examining the windows carefully. In doing this we found that the window in a small room opening into the hall was unfastened and slightly open. I said at once that I had not left it like that.

"I must speak to Sarah about this," said Mrs. Westcott. "She must have been very careless to leave the window ajar in this fashion."

We made it secure and then returned upstairs. I had been going to put out the two big lamps in the hall when my mistress told me to leave them alight.

"I've heard that plenty of lights burning will make a good protection for a house," said she, "so leave them on, as if we were up." In a little while she said I might go to bed, and she would sit up with the baby awhile. I was not a bit sleepy, and I said so, and asked if I mightn't stay up in case anything should be wanted.

We had known each other so long that we were not exactly like an ordinary mistress and servant, so she agreed.

As I said, we were sitting up in the night nursery, which was immediately above the little room where we had found the window unfastened. Both rooms looked out on a small courtyard, which had no direct connection with the house.

It was about an hour later, when all of a sudden we both jumped and looked round at each other. What was that? We listened without drawing a breath. There it was again. Someone moving about quietly, but still we could hear their steps on the flags of the yard under the window.

It could not be Mr. Westcott, for there was no door there. Who was it?

If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget that moment I felt sick again with fright. "The diamonds," flashed into my mind like lightning. I knew they were in the house. I was so silly with fear that I hardly knew what I was doing, and I must have said "The diamonds" aloud, for my mistress said sharply, "Be quiet, Jane."

We strained our ears again. Whoever it was they were trying the window which we had found unfastened.

"There is someone trying to break into the house, Jane," said my mistress, as coolly as if it were quite the regular thing. As soon as her first start was over she was as calm as possible.

"Yes'm," said I, for I didn't know what else to say. The baby woke again and began to whimper. She took him up in her arms, laying her cheek down to his and quieting him.

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Then she carried him up and down the room, listening with all her might. Crash! My heart leapt into my mouth. The window below had been broken so that the catch might be reached from the outside.

It was certainly someone very well acquainted with the state of the house at the time, for the lamps were burning as brightly in the hall as if the whole household were at home and astir.

When my mistress heard the noise of the glass she stopped her walk and laid the baby again in his crib. Without a word she went out, and I followed to the door. I saw her go to a spare room at the other end of the corridor, where the master kept his guns and fishing-rods, and such like.

She was back in a moment with a rook rifle, do you call it? Yes; well, very likely that's what it was. I don't understand much about such things. Anyway, she'd got this gun and a box of the little brass cases you put in them. She knew what to do with it too. She opened it in the middle, as I've seen gentlemen do many a time, slipped in one of the cartridges, as you call them, and clicked it to. Then she stood again listening.

"Are you going to shoot them, 'm?" said I. She turned on me as short as could be.

"Why not?" says she as fierce as possible. "What's my baby done that these villains should come here to disturb, perhaps kill him? They came here of their own accord, and they must take the consequences."

While this was going on, the window below had been pushed wide open, and in another instant footsteps were heard in the room beneath.

"Jane," said Mrs. Westcott, "don't leave baby for a second." She gave him one kiss, caught up the gun, and went out. She had on soft bedroom slippers, which made no noise as she walked. Although she had given me strict orders to stop in the nursery, yet I couldn't help following her to see what would happen. I crept across the landing, and looked over the stair rail. It was quite plain at once what her plan was.

The room which had been broken into opened nowhere but into the hall, and from the middle landing of the stairs the door could be plainly seen. It was on this landing that my mistress had taken her stand, the gun pointed directly at the door. The lamps made the place as light as day.

I stood in the shadow above, my heart thumping against my ribs. It seemed hours and hours before the door was slowly and carefully opened. Then a man, in a long rough coat down to his heels, something black over his face, and a big, slouching hat, stepped out. He was alone, for he closed the door behind him.

"Stand there!" cried my mistress, in a deep, rough voice I should never have known for hers, levelling her gun with a sure aim. The man started in every limb, and looked up. He put his hand to his face as if to assure himself that the covering was there.

Whether his start disarranged it, or whether he hadn't been very handy at fastening it, I can't tell; but the stuff—it was a piece of velvet—slipped from his face and fell. For a second there was the deadest silence. Then my mistress gave a moan like some poor dumb animal. It was the master. It was Mr. Richard Westcott himself.

The stairs were winding, and from where I stood I could see both their faces. Never did I see such scorn and contempt shine in anybody's eyes as they did in hers that night. Never did I see such terror as his face showed. For a while she didn't move. Then she lifted the gun as if she would have shot him where he stood. He saw it too, and half raised his hands as if begging for mercy.

She dropped the weapon, then seized it madly again, and turned the muzzle to herself. Poor thing! I could see that she was beside herself with rage and shame at having such a husband, and didn't know what she was doing.

How the idea came into my mind I can't say, except that I am a woman myself, but I flew back into the nursery. The baby had gone comfortably to sleep, and lay there, one little fist tucked under his cheek, and the other lying out on the coverlet. I never stopped an instant, but—it was black and blue the next morning—I pinched his fat little arm with all my might.

He woke up and began to scream, I can promise you, and before you could turn round in flew my mistress, flung me away from the crib as if I had been a feather, and whipped him up into her arms.

"Go to bed at once, Jane," said she sharply; "there's nothing the matter."

"This riddle isn't very hard to read," thought I, as I undressed and got into bed. "Mr. Westcott meant to rob his own house of his uncle's diamonds, unless I'm very much mistaken." I listened for a while, but not a sound was to be heard anywhere in the house; and in a little time I went to sleep.

The next morning Mr. Westcott came down to breakfast with as natural an air as if he had let himself in with his latch-key the night before. My mistress had spent the night in the nursery with the little boy, and never a word did she ever say to me about our midnight alarm. Neither of them ever suspected that I knew what I did, and I was careful to hold my tongue.

From that day on she shrank from her husband, and clung more and more to the child, and for his part he always seemed to watch her with a sort of stealthy fear.

Six months later the little boy died very suddenly, and after that Mrs. Westcott never held her head up again. She pined and pined until she took to her bed, and three months to the very day after her child died she died herself.

I was alone with her at the time, for the nurse was down-stairs. I called her, then went to the dining-room where Mr. Westcott was. He was sitting near the window trying to look mournful, but when he saw the tears running down my face, for I had known her since we were children, he sprang from his chair. I shall never forget his face. The look of relief that leapt into his eyes—the rascal! He couldn't have kept it back for a thousand pounds—and the great sigh which broke from him showed plainly that his own skin was more to him than fifty wives.

It was all gone in a flash, and then he put his handkerchief up to his face. People who didn't know him were dreadfully sorry for him, for he did take on about it as natural as possible.

When the funeral was over I cleared out of the place bag and baggage, as quickly as I could, and I've never set eyes on him since.

What became of him? Oh, in about a couple of years he married a Miss Blake from Ufford way, and they went out to Australia, sheep-farming or something; got a host of children, too, I've heard. Old Mr. Westcott, his uncle? Lor' bless you, he's alive now, and lives at Brighton. He's over ninety years old, but they tell me he's as lively as ever and vows he'll live to be a hundred.


## A MAN'S

first duty to his wife is to make her happy. If you ask her what happiness is, she will say—that is if she is addicted to telling the truth—the enjoyment of a companion whom she can consult on domestic matters when in doubt, and with whom she can spend her spare moments gleaning information. Her husband can't be expected to play this *rôle*. He is

## A MAN,

with plenty to occupy his mind, without discussing the subject of cooking, or of ornamenting the fireplace. But he can buy her a pennyworth of happiness every week if he so chooses,

## FOR A' THAT

*Home Notes* aims at is to be a perfect companion to a woman, no matter what her station in life may be.


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SEPTEMBER has many lovers. Its cool, clear days are a refreshment to poor humanity, after it has borne patiently (or impatiently) with the blazing August sun. Everybody gladly leaves the Alps or the seaside to return to the plain, where the trees hang full of luscious fruit, and where the grapes weigh the vines almost to the ground.

All know Verona, with its monuments and its glorious old palaces; and who does not like its wines and peaches? Never had there been a more promising year than 1882. Everyone was rejoicing, and even the poor were looking forward to a small share in the good harvest of the rich.

A stonecutter was living in a poor, very poor, two-storey house, not far from Verona, on the Adige. No one sees the Adige for the first time without some sensation of fear. It looks so angry, with its muddy water, rushing past, as if it hunted after some fleeing criminal. But the stonecutter had no such fear. All he cared for was to have a roof for his wife and three children, and he was proud to own those four walls, which he called his home. His wife was a gentle, good woman, and might have been very helpful to him; but unfortunately a sick child kept her at home, and she could only assist her husband by being neat and economical—if extreme poverty can be economical.

Two boys did their best to aid their father and mother, and in their small way succeeded in earning a few pennies here and there. One had found a purse one day, and hastened with it to Verona, where he had deposited it in the hands of the police. The reward given had helped buy a good bed for the little invalid, and it seemed a godsend. And now this year, in their make-believe little garden, a few vines were bearing grapes, oh, so beautiful, so nearly ripe! The boys would not touch one of those grapes. They were all—all to be for Maria the invalid. The boys actually believed the grapes might cure their little sister.

But this September of '82 began with rain. It rained and rained, and suddenly a cry of terror struck the whole Venetian territory, and part of Lombardy. The inundations had begun. The rivers rose from hour to hour, and the night, the night of horrors came when the Adige left its bed and rushed wildly through country and city, carrying with it all that attempted to hinder its wild course. Ruins of all kinds were floating, animals in a last attempt at saving themselves, beds, tables, trees—all passed, showing the terrible ravages of the angry flood. The country was one vast lake. Trains had ceased running, bridges had crumbled, and no telegram could be sent to soothe anxious hearts. Nothing but destruction was to be seen everywhere between Venice and Verona.

Troops were sent to help; boats came from all parts, and everybody lent a hand to aid the half-distracted population. The king hurried to the unhappy cities, and he was seen helping and encouraging soldiers and officers. The houses nearest the river were naturally the most in danger. The misfortune came so quickly and so unexpectedly that even the stonecutter had left home in the morning for his work which lay at quite a distance from his house. Late in the afternoon he heard the terrible tale from a soldier, who was passing rapidly with a message. The poor man stood for a moment, paralysed with terror and gazing helplessly at the grey sky. Would he reach his house in time? "Oh, my poor, poor wife!"

A hot, burning tear rolled over his blanched face. He tried to walk, but he was almost as powerless as his little Maria. Sinking on his knees, he prayed with his whole heart: "Oh, help us, good God!"

As if his prayer had been heard, the sound of a carriage came distinctly to him. When it reached him, his hands went up in a desperately pleading gesture to the two gentlemen sitting in it. Without waiting for the horses to stop, one of them jumped out and, lifting the poor man up, asked: "What is it?"

The stonecutter in a few words told his anxiety. Before he had finished, the gentleman had helped the poor man into the carriage, which had come to a halt, and making him sit near the coachman, said! "Tell him where you live," and he added, "*Presto*, Piero, go as fast as your horses will go." What had seemed impossible to the stonecutter was easy work for the two beautiful horses. But soon the wheels were partly covered by water, and as far as the eye could reach was water, nothing but water.

The heart of the wretched father became again utterly hopeless. He covered his eyes, in order not to see such desolation. Suddenly, mingled with the noise of the water, he heard cries for help, Looking up, he saw a woman struggling through the water and trying to hold a little child above it. A sharp "Stop!" and in a moment his benefactor was half wading, half swimming through the flood, and in a few moments the exhausted woman was lifted with her child into the carriage. A few yards further on, and, with a cry of pleasure, the stonecutter saw his own house in the distance. But his joy was very short. The water had reached the first story and would soon reach the second, even if the house stood firm. If only a boat were at hand!

"Unharness one horse, Piero," ordered the master of the carriage, and then turning to his companion, an officer with whom he had been exchanging words of deep interest and anxiety all the time, he said in a friendly, but decided tone: "You will ride to Verona, Count, and order a boat to come this way at once."

The count jumped immediately from the carriage, mounted a horse and fairly flew over the flooded street. Meanwhile, the sharp eyes of the poor father had more guessed than seen three figures on the roof of the house. He suddenly thought of the little Maria, who usually lay in the first-floor room, and a cold chill struck him to the heart. Yes, there were three figures on the roof, all of them shouting for help. His Maria, his sweet little girl, must be lost, drowned in that terrible water, which seemed to rise every minute.

He turned his pale face to the inside of the carriage. He saw how the gentleman had taken off his overcoat and was wrapping in it the mother and child whom he had saved, and was trying to comfort her. She was telling how she had come out to gather herbs for a drug-store and had suddenly been

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*Sinking on his knees, he prayed with his whole heart.*

surprised by the waters. She fled, until she felt her drenched skirt drawing her down to sure death. "And now," she said, "I am saved, saved with my angel!" and kissing her child passionately, she looked gratefully at her saviour. But he scarcely heard her, for he was now standing up, watching intently for the boat, which, though it had to come from Verona, up the river against the rushing current, must soon reach the spot. The water was invading the second floor of the house, and a cry of terror came from the man, who was almost losing his mind at seeing his dear ones so menaced.

"Courage, my man, courage! I see the boat coming," the gentleman exclaimed. And so it was. Six soldiers were rowing with all their might against the fury of the torrent. A man stood in their midst, leading and directing their efforts. But, oh, what slow progress. Will they never reach the house? Will the angry river get its prey? Will his dear ones die before the eyes of the distracted father?

They all stand up in the carriage, watching every stroke of the soldiers, breathless, unable even to utter a sound. The water rises, rises; and they see the women bend in terror over the border of the roof, as if to calculate how long the agony is to last. The horse neighs, and in the distance another neighing is heard. It is a soldier returning with the missing horse.

"There is danger!" he calls. "Turn the carriage!"

But his call is not heard, and receives no answer. A white, agonised face turns from the house. It has seen the boat. It is just high enough for the boys to jump in; but no, they refuse, and so does the mother. The house seems to shake under the power of the water. But what is that? Two soldiers leave the oars; one jumps on the shoulder of the other, and with a sign seems to say that he is steady. The leader clings easily upon this human pole and reaches the roof with a daring jump. He bends, and, lifting a form from it, gives some orders to the soldiers. A cord is thrown to him. He ties it strongly to the chimney, and then begins the dangerous descent. But he is young and brave, and God helps the brave.

The little girl is tenderly deposited in the bottom of the boat. He returns once more; the mother wants her other children saved first. Lastly he descends with her own slight weight supported by his arm. Looking up he gives rapid orders. The oars fall in the water, and now the current carries them rapidly toward the carriage.

The soldier meanwhile has harnessed the horse. At a distance, the boat stops. The water is too shallow to row further. The young officer unhesitatingly jumps out, and half wading, half swimming, reaches the carriage.

"For heaven's sake, Piero," he cries, "ride as fast as you can!"

Then turning to the stonecutter, "The soldiers will take your family to Verona to the hospital. We will find them there."

But the water is deep. The horses are frightened, and it takes all the skill of the old coachman to reach the dry part of the road. A loud crash behind them makes them shiver. The house is gone; they all know it. The stonecutter sits as if stunned; he hears and sees nothing. Can he ever forget the agony of this day! And the poor woman holds her baby tighter to her breast wondering who this powerful saviour is.

Soon they reach Verona, and drive up to the hospital. The young officer helps the woman to alight, speaking, as he does so, a few words hurriedly to the janitor. The man looks up and, taking off his cap, he directs the woman where to go and get dry clothes. She turns to thank her benefactor, but he is looking sadly away, and she dares not speak.

The stonecutter descends, and, hat in hand, he says only: "Grazia." His heart is full, for he sees his wife coming up the street, followed by a soldier carrying a little form tenderly wrapped in his jacket. The boys rush up, and, before he can speak again, the carriage with the two gentlemen has left.

The next day a manservant inquires after the whole family in the hospital, and leaves an envelope for the happy father. It holds a yellow bank-note—five hundred francs! The poor stonecutter wishes he could thank his benefactor, but he remains unknown to him. Perhaps, if he should go to Rome some day, he might find him in King Humbert's palace. If not there, he will be sure to find him where Italy is suffering.

*He was now standing up watching intently for the boat.*

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# A DECEPTIVE DREAM.

"My dear, I have had an extraordinary dream."

Mr. Arnold Carewe spoke with solemn emphasis, a tone of gravity in his voice.

Scene, the sunny breakfast room of the Carewes; time, nine in the morning one clear, cold winter day. Mrs. Carewe glanced over the top of the silver coffee urn at her liege lord, with a look of mild interest in her deep, dark eyes.

"A dream! Why, Arnold, I thought you did not believe in such things!" she exclaimed. Then, at the sight of the gravity of his face, her own grew concerned. "What was it?" she eagerly asked.

"Well, of course, it was only a dream," returned Mr. Carewe, "but, to say the least, it was odd that I should dream the same thing over—in every particular—exactly three blessed times last night. It seemed a little odd, to be sure. Besides, I dreamed that I am to die upon a certain day, and at a certain hour. My dear, I shall not tell you when, for it is not far distant, and the knowledge of it might make you nervous, even though it is only a dream—and therefore not infallible."

Breakfast over, Arnold Carewe went to his office. It was Carewe & Carewe—a well-known law-firm—and Arnold was senior partner; his brother Jack comprised the rest of the firm.

As he entered the office, Jack, seated at a tall desk, glanced up with a strange look.

"I say, Arnold, I had a dream about you last night which made me a trifle uneasy," he began, "and as you are a little late this morning, I was beginning to fear that something was amiss. Had you not come in as you did I intended taking a cab and going up to your house. Glad you're all right, old fellow!"

"A dream"—aghast. "So had I. What did you dream, Jack?"

"Well, seeing you are all right, I'll tell you," returned Jack. "I dreamed that you are to die—don't look so pale, old boy; you are not dead yet, but a long way from it—I dreamed that you were to die on the 10th of January, exactly three weeks from to-day."

Arnold Carewe sank into a seat, and looked faint.

No wonder! That was the exact date which his dream—three times repeated—had indicated. But he controlled his nervousness, and turned to his brother, with affected amusement.

"Perhaps you dreamed the hour, too, while you were about it!" he jocosely observed.

"So I did. January 10th, as you will see by glancing at yonder calendar, comes on Tuesday. My dream said that at twenty minutes past two, precisely, on Tuesday, January 10, you would depart this life!"

Arnold Carewe started to his feet, trembling like a leaf. No wonder, for it was his own dream, in every particular. It seemed incredible. But he decided to say nothing to his brother as to the purport of his dream, but to patiently wait, and make all preparations for the great finale.

For a man to find that he has exactly three weeks—twenty-one days—in which to live is a very odd sensation. The murderer condemned to the scaffold feels very much as Arnold Carewe felt in the days that followed. He went about like a man in a dream. He first "set his house in order," making his will, attending to the various affairs of his business, paying off debts, doing all that he could, with a sort of satisfaction, to make it easier for the wife and little ones, soon to be left alone. They would be well provided for—that was a great blessing.

He became very devout also. Every day he read the prayers in his little family circle; and attended divine service on Sunday; feeling a shudder of nervous dread run over him when the second Sunday had gone, and he knew that only one remained to him.

It was wonderful how tenaciously the idea clung to his mind—the positive belief that he was a doomed man, marked by Death as his prey. How gentle and kind and tender he was to all at home. Perhaps, if more people could develop a similar hallucination it might be better for the peace of many a household. To be ever-preparing for the great event would keep us gentler and kinder and more considerate.

Looking back upon that time, in after years, Bessie Carewe was obliged to admit that it was the happiest, most peaceful time of all her married life. But, of course, she knew nothing of her husband's firm belief in his approaching demise. She had, in fact, forgotten all about Arnold's odd dream, and he had not explained to her its horrible exactness.

The days went by. The Christmas holidays—sad and sweetly solemn to the man who felt that they were the very last he should ever see upon earth—were gone, and the seventh day of January had come. Carewe now discarded his watch, placing it in his dressing-case. He did not wish to see a timepiece. Only seventy-two hours between him and the great Unknown!

So, carefully avoiding every timepiece, making all possible efforts to forget the fatal and fast-approaching hour, Arnold Carewe waited.

The 10th of January came at last—a bright, winter day.

He arose in the morning, after a sleepless night, saying to himself:

"My last day on earth! God help me!"

He looked so pale and worn, and so evidently ill, that his wife begged him to remain home from the office that day.

As that was what he had secretly intended doing, he consented.

As the fatal hour drew near—for he imagined it to be near the time—he made his way to the pretty guest-chamber and lay down upon a soft couch. A fire had been kindled in the grate and the fire was warm and cheerful. Over the fireplace, upon the marble mantel, a tiny clock was standing. Arnold Carewe turned his eyes resolutely away from it. He did not wish to know the exact moment. So he lay there, and gradually a slow feeling of torpor began to steal over him. His wife came into the room, and with her the two pretty children—he had told her to bring them. He took the loved ones in his arms and strained them to his heart in a passionate farewell, all the more solemn because he dared not tell Bessie that he believed himself to be dying. He was conscious of a feeling of gratitude that he had been warned in time.

After a time Bessie took the children away. Then she returned to his side with a glass of wine.

"Here, dear, drink this," she said sweetly; "it will help you!"

He obeyed her, and then lay watching the graceful figure as she moved about the room.

At last his eyes, in spite of his determination to the contrary, wandered to the clock and rested there.

Good heavens! Ten minutes past two!

"Bessie," he moaned feebly, "come!"

Then all grew dark before his eyes; he felt like one stepping softly away—then darkness fell.

"Arnold! Arnold! wake up! I am afraid you will sleep too long! It is six o'clock!"

Bessie Carewe bent over his prostrate form, and Arnold Carewe opened his eyes.

"Am I in heaven?" he gasped.

"Dear me—no! You have been asleep ever since half-past two! I gave you a dose of my sleeping medicine in that glass of wine. I know you have not slept for nights. Why, Arnold, what are you staring at?"

For he was sitting up now, gazing in the rosy lamp-light, at that clock.

Still ten minutes past two!

"Oh, yes," she laughed lightly; "the clock is broken."

. . . . . .

And Arnold Carewe has never believed in dreams since that day.

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# NEW DEPARTURE IN INSURANCE.

## The Independent Order of Foresters

Gives Life Assurance at Rates slightly above actual cost—that is, at less than half the usual charges of Life Assurance Companies. The Premiums are based upon "The Combined Experience Table," which was prepared by a Committee of Eminent Actuaries from the Experience of Seventeen British Life Offices. This Table of EXAMPLES gives the Cost for £400; the Average Premiums of Insurance Companies; the RATES of the I.O.F.; and the SAVING EFFECTED BY JOINING THE ORDER.

| Age last Birthday. | The Combined Experience Table Per Year. | £400. Average Cost of £400 in British Assurance Companies Per Year. | I.O.F. Table of Premiums Per Year. | Annual Saving to Members of the I. O. F. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| 21 | 3 1 6 | 8 1 4 | 3 12 0 | 4 9 4 |
| 25 | 3 4 10 | 8 16 4 | 3 16 0 | 5 0 4 |
| 30 | 3 10 4 | 10 0 4 | 4 0 0 | 6 0 4 |
| 35 | 3 17 6 | 11 9 4 | 4 12 0 | 6 17 4 |
| 40 | 4 6 4 | 13 6 4 | 5 0 0 | 8 6 4 |
| 45 | 5 1 10 | 15 13 8 | 6 0 0 | 9 13 8 |
| 49 | 6 12 10 | 18 3 4 | 7 16 0 | 10 7 4 |

The full sum assured is payable at death. All premium-paying of ordinary members in the I.O.F. ceases at 70 years of age, when one-tenth of the amount assured is paid to them annually, the unexhausted balance being payable at death. The entrance fees are very moderate, a £100 policy costing 17s.; £200, £1 16s. 6d.; £400, £2 3s.; 600, £2 9s. 6d.; £800, £2 16s.; and £1,000, £3 5s. Court Dues (10s. to 12s. per annum) have to be paid by each member.

The Accumulated Funds amount to £160,000, of which £20,000 has been deposited with the British Government. Every claim has been paid within ten days, £328,000 having thus been paid during the last eleven years.

**CHIEF OFFICE FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM:—**

24, CHARING CROSS, WHITEHALL, LONDON;

*Office for Scotland:—217, BUCHANAN STREET, GLASGOW,*

**Where Prospectuses and Forms of Application for Membership may be obtained.**


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